By Kevin Roy (ABC7)

August 24, 2009 (ARLINGTON HEIGHTS, Ill.) (WLS) -- Tenth District Congressman Mark Kirk hosted a town hall debate, with hundreds of people on both sides of this controversial issue turning out.

A packed house prompted back-to-back town hall meetings.

Judging from the turnout and the passion on both sides, health care reform is issue number one on the public's mind right now. That was the assessment from Kirk after the four-hour marathon ended. Many in the crowd were with him and against the a "public option."

"Isn't democracy grand?" Kirk, (R) northern suburbs, asked the crowd.

Kirk's opener was a salute to the overwhelming turnout for his health care reform town hall meeting.

So many showed up that police turned dozens away, sending them outside to wait for a second meeting that Kirk added to accommodate the crowds.

Inside the Arlington Heights Village Hall, it was standing-room only. It was a mostly civil forum, but Kirk did face a few critics.

Kirk first tore apart President Barack Obama's health care plan with a slide show, painting it as too expensive. Then Kirk touted his own plan, which he kept referring to as a centrist reform bill -- less expensive but less inclusive.

"What we need is the right answer, not the quick answer," said Kirk.

"He didn't counter the savings we would have. Sure, he's saying the deficit is going here, but he didn't counter the savings this plan would save," said Cheryl Greeman, who supports the Obama plan.

"I challenge him to look at one government program that isn't either bankrupt or run totally irresponsibly," said Pat McGuire, who opposes the Obama plan.

One man snuck in a sign that was critical of anything government run. And most in the crowd did seem to agree with Kirk's stance against a public option.

But Kirk took some heat for accepting big campaign cash from the health insurance industry.

"Insurance company money may buy you a nice little campaign, but it will not buy you my vote," said Gary Albrecht, who supports the Obama plan.

"I raised $112,000. So at that rate, I'm 5 percent of what the president raised from the insurance industry," said Kirk.

This article was edited to comply with Franking Commission Guidelines.